

UCLA Faculty Association

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Home

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Thursday, October 10, 2024

An Alternative Model



Two university heads - E. Gordon Gee, president of West Virginia University, and Kent Syverud, chancellor of Syracuse University - expressed dismay in a recent article in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) on the direction of college sports, given the advent of NIL, the *de facto* pay-for-play system:

Two years ago, a Southeastern Conference NIL collective paid

\$150,000 to keep a defensive end from transferring. To retain him this season, it had to pay \$1.5 million — and that's just for one player.

There isn't a day that goes by when university presidents aren't forced to make difficult choices about the allocation of finite resources. Until recently, these decisions were hard, but navigable. Now, if you are a Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) university president, you are going to be held responsible for what happens next, not only to college football but to women's collegiate sports and Olympic sports, which are fueled by football revenues.

Our balkanized system of college football — the conference structure itself — is at the heart of the problem. Recent conference realignments have made the issue even worse, disrupting traditional rivalries — the heart and soul of college football — as well as diluting regional matchups and increasing cost and travel burdens for schools and student-athletes.

Competitive balance has eroded, with the same few teams dominating every year. The introduction of name, image, and likeness (NIL) rights, increased use of the transfer portal, and lack of salary caps are exacerbating the divide and have the potential to bankrupt the entire system.

Certainly, there are many traditionalists who love football inside the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC. But those conferences are now unrecognizable, stretched and contorted in ways that make no sense and undervalue the game. The disruption has been even more extreme for the Pac-12, and other conferences will follow. If we don't act now, sustainable college sports will shrink to 30-40 schools. Without intervention, these factors will ultimately prove to be the demise of intercollegiate athletics as we have come to know them.

In the absence of a major rethinking of the college football system, the sport will evolve in one of two ways:

The first scenario is the implosion of FBS, with schools and conferences jockeying for position and cannibalizing each other in a race to the bottom. Perhaps only 36 schools could be left standing, barely able to afford the House settlement and soaring NIL costs of top-tier football. The other 100 FBS schools will be fighting over revenue scraps, and by 2030 they will become largely extinct in college sports.

A second scenario is that the SEC and Big Ten will save themselves and accelerate the implosion by creating their own 36-school "Super League" with football, basketball, baseball, softball, and a few other revenue sports. The NCAA and the rest of FBS will be left with no real revenue or future.

FBS presidents must take control of their most lucrative athletic asset and establish an independent, impartial entity to reorganize college football for the benefit of the 136 FBS schools and athletes in football and all sports.

We are not advocating for the professionalization of college football. And we are not advocating for any particular group. Rather we are advocating for FBS presidents to make sure we are listening carefully to all options. For example, there is a new group called College Sports Tomorrow (CST), composed of college and pro-sports executives who are embedded in higher education in various ways. CST has recommended reorganizing FBS into the College Student Football League, or CSFL, a single, unified college football league designed to secure the future of not only football, but all college sports. While we respect CST, this group itself is not the point. It's their ideas, their principles, and the substance of their approach that we encourage FBS presidents to contemplate. Their proposal was outlined in The Wall Street Journal earlier this week. It is an idea worth consideration and discussion.

The new football league they've proposed signals their comprehension of the difference between college and the pros. It would encompass all 130-plus FBS schools. It would replace the NCAA and the College Football Playoff while maintaining aspects of the governance role of the existing conferences. The top 72 programs would compete in the Power 12 Conference, with the remaining 64 teams facing off in a second conference, the Group of 8...

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[UC](#) (1893) [politics](#) (1773) [UC Regents](#) (1765) [health care](#) (1319) [State Budget](#) (1214) [governor](#) (1060) [UC budget crisis](#) (917) [UC-Berkeley](#) (854) [diversity](#) (659) [pension](#) (644) [pensions](#) (588) [tuition](#) (519)

We have made no commitment to CST or [that] exact approach. But as university presidents, we need to get back in the game and take responsibility for our future. We can't rely on commissioners or Congress to do this. More engagement, urgency, and leadership are needed from all of us to breathe new life into college sports and create a sustainable new model that is steeped in the cherished traditions we all want to preserve.

Full story at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-demise-of-college-sports-as-we-know-them>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 6:00 AM

No comments:



Labels: athletics, Syracuse U, West Virginia U

Wednesday, October 9, 2024







We haven't stopped wondering...



It's true that it did cost \$80 million and that no one has yet figured out what to do with it. But it would be a shame if something else happened. So we will continue to wonder.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 6:00 AM

No comments:



Labels: UCLA

♪Take Us Out of the Ball Game♪ - Part 3

Our baseball drama at the VA continues: From: KABC: *After UCLA was locked out of its baseball stadium on the VA's West Los Angeles campus by a federal judge who terminated the lease, the university has come up with a proposal on how the 10 acres it rented on VA grounds for decades can be used primarily for the benefit of the military veterans for whom the land was originally deeded. The shutdown order was issued Sept. 25 after a court hearing in which U.S. District Judge David O. Carter voiced frustration at UCLA and other ex-leaseholders at the VA's West Los Angeles campus for not offering satisfactory uses for land that he ruled had been illegally contracted from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.*

...In a modified proposal filed with the court Thursday, UCLA said it would increase the rent it pays the VA from the current \$320,000 annually to a total of \$600,000 for the next 12 months. In addition, the university said it will continue its longstanding program of providing health care services to veterans at the UCLA Hospital and Medical School at little or no cost. UCLA also offered to cede at least 2 acres in 12 months -- and potentially more if necessary. UCLA said veterans



admissions (502) athletics (471) CSU (387) transportation (373) UC-Davis (363) online education (336) ucrp (294) audio (287) UCOP (286) uc retirement (284) new hotel-conference center (282) UC enrollment (276) traffic (271) enrollment (248) UC-San Diego (234) community colleges (228) LAO (209) UC-Irvine (174) fund raising (160) UC-Santa Cruz (145) UC-Santa Barbara (144) UC-San Francisco (138) faculty center (136) controller (135) ballot propositions (132) UC-Riverside (129) CalPERS (120) faculty pay (102) Master Plan (101) UC-Merced (101) Yudof (89) UCRS retirement (60) parking (59) privatization (59) Faculty Association at UCLA (57) CalSTRS (50) UC Berkeley (33) copyright (29) campus climate survey (28) UCRS (21) Michigan Model (18) UC Merced (17) uc funding (16) State Contribution (14) UCOF (14) Regents (13) faculty recruitment (12) UC pay (7) graduate education (6) UC San Diego (5) UCpolitics (3) teaching evaluation (3) UC Irvine (2) UC Santa Cruz (2)

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2025 (2)
 - ▼ January (2)
 - The governor and the 4th quarter.
 - Our New Year's Day Offering

- 2024 (832)
- 2023 (828)
- 2022 (719)
- 2021 (710)
- 2020 (914)
- 2019 (671)
- 2018 (595)
- 2017 (666)
- 2016 (715)
- 2015 (765)
- 2014 (704)
- 2013 (776)
- 2012 (839)
- 2011 (738)
- 2010 (431)
- 2009 (12)

Contributors

-  California Policy Issues
-  Toby Higbie
-  UCLA Faculty Association

additionally receive care from students at the UCLA School of Dentistry, UCLA School of Nursing, and UCLA Department of Social Work. The university contends that services provided to veterans are valued at \$2.7 million.

...In its filing, UCLA argued that in 2016, Congress "expressly authorized UCLA to continue playing baseball at the site, in exchange for veteran-focused consideration that UCLA has not simply met, but substantially exceeded." ...

Full story at <https://abc7.com/amp/post/ucla-offers-proposal-use-jackie-robinson-baseball-stadium-amid-lawsuit-veterans-housing/15401324/>.

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Prior posts: <https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2024/09/take-us-out-of-ball-game-part-2.html> and <https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2024/09/take-us-out-of-ball-game.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 5:30 AM

No comments:



Labels: [athletics](#), [UCLA](#)

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

Health Insurance Costs Going Up

**A letter to the community from
Systemwide HR Vice President
Cheryl Lloyd**

October 8, 2024

As we approach our annual Open Enrollment for health benefits, I want to share what we know about UC's medical plan costs for 2025 and update you on how we're preparing for 2026 and beyond. My goal is to provide information as early as possible so you can make informed decisions about your benefit plans.



The national trends that increased medical costs and medical plan premiums last year have continued. UC's medical plan costs will rise again this year due to increased health care utilization as our population ages and rates of chronic health conditions rise, enhanced benefits, and the rapidly expanding use of costly new drugs and treatments.

To limit the impact of rising costs on employees and retirees, the decision was made, in consultation with President Drake, EVP-COO Nava and EVP-CFO Brostrom, to increase UC's 2025 contribution to medical premiums by \$198M over 2024. Even with this additional contribution from UC, employee and retiree premium contributions will need to increase.

Budgeting for the high costs of food, housing and child care is already a challenge for many in our community, so any increase is painful. Our people are our most important resource, and the Systemwide Human Resources team has spent the last year working closely with our health plan partners to look for every opportunity to balance the quality of our benefits with their affordability. We've also spent months analyzing how UC can minimize the impact of higher costs in a challenging budget year.

To rise to this challenge, we're focusing on a principle that is central to our mission — the critical importance of health care equity and access. We understand 2024 employee contributions were significantly higher than anticipated and explored multiple options to mitigate increases for 2025. As a result, employees will see no more than an 11% increase (with exception of the CORE plan) in 2025. Additionally, employee contributions will continue to be based on salary, with higher employee contributions and percentage increases for those who earn more.

Significant health plan changes for 2025

With the exception of those enrolled in CORE medical, employees with annual salaries up to \$140K a year will see 9% increases in their medical plan premiums and employees with annual salaries over \$140K a year will see 11% increases.

These increases are consistent with other public employers in California. For example, CalPERS has announced an overall premium increase of 10.79% for 2025.

Retiree contribution changes for UC's retiree plans are more variable, with UC maintaining its agreement to fund a minimum of 70% of the cost of retiree medical plan premiums.

To ensure that the costs of medical coverage are shared fairly, the CORE PPO plan will require an employee premium contribution beginning in 2025. Contributions for CORE will be the lowest of the UC medical plan options, but we know this is a big adjustment for UC employees who have appreciated the option of a plan that did not require a premium contribution. We will do all we can to help those employees understand their choices and consider carefully whether CORE is still the best option for them.

To help minimize premium increases, some of the costs for receiving care and filling prescriptions will go up next year. For example, the copay for an outpatient visit will increase from \$20 to \$30 for members of UC Blue & Gold HMO, Kaiser HMO, UC Care (UC Select/Tier 1), UC Medicare Choice and Kaiser Senior Advantage — the first such increase for these plans in over 10 years. Copays for prescription drugs will go up for most of UC's medical plans, and there will be a new drug tier for specialty drugs that will have 30% coinsurance, up to \$150 per prescription, for UC Blue & Gold HMO and Kaiser HMO.

Preparing for 2026 and beyond

We owe it to the UC community to find and take every opportunity to control costs and protect the security and quality of UC's benefits. To this end, we have been working with expert consultants on a large-scale analysis of our overall benefits strategy and priorities. Throughout all our work to ensure UC's benefits meet the needs of our community, we will continue to seek out the counsel and engagement of faculty, staff, retiree and emeriti groups.

Keeping you informed

Open Enrollment begins on Thursday, October 31 this year. Keep an eye on UCnet and UCnetwork for regular updates, take advantage of your location's Open Enrollment resources and check your mailbox and email inbox for details and reminders. Your benefits and communications colleagues across UC stand ready to keep you informed and help you make the best choices for your needs and the needs of your family.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Lloyd, Vice President, Systemwide Human Resources

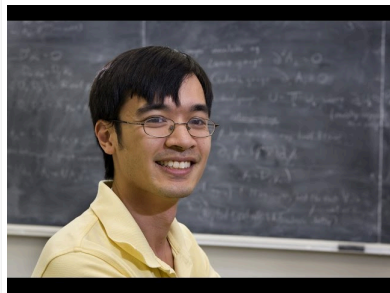
Posted by California Policy Issues at 9:47 AM

No comments:



Labels: [health care](#), [UC](#), [uc retirement](#)

Tao on AI



[The Atlantic](#) recently featured an interview by Matteo Wong with UCLA mathematician Terence Tao on the future of AI in math. Much of the discussion in academia has focused on such issues as student cheating. Tao, in contrast, looks at the utility of AI for research.

Terence Tao, a mathematics professor at UCLA, is a real-life superintelligence. The "Mozart of Math," as he is sometimes called, is widely considered the world's greatest living mathematician. He

has won numerous awards, including the equivalent of a Nobel Prize for mathematics, for his advances and proofs. Right now, AI is nowhere close to his level.

But technology companies are trying to get it there. Recent, attention-grabbing generations of AI—even the almighty ChatGPT—were not built to handle mathematical reasoning. They were instead focused on language: When you asked such a program to answer a basic question, it did not understand and execute an equation or formulate a proof, but instead presented an answer based on which words were likely to appear in sequence. For instance, the original ChatGPT can't add or multiply, but has seen enough examples of algebra to solve $x + 2 = 4$: "To solve the equation $x + 2 = 4$, subtract 2 from both sides ...". Now, however, OpenAI is explicitly marketing a new line of "reasoning models," known collectively as the o1 series, for their ability to problem-solve "much like a person" and work through complex mathematical and scientific tasks and queries. If these models are successful, they could represent a sea change for the slow, lonely work that Tao and his peers do.

After I saw Tao post his impressions of o1 online—he compared it to a "mediocre, but not completely incompetent" graduate student—I wanted to understand more about his views on the technology's potential. In a Zoom call last week, he described a kind of AI-enabled, "industrial-scale mathematics" that has never been possible before: one in which AI, at least in the near future, is not a creative collaborator in its own right so much as a lubricant for mathematicians' hypotheses and approaches. This new sort of math, which could unlock terra incognita of knowledge, will remain human at its core, embracing how people and machines have very different strengths that should be thought of as complementary rather than competing.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Matteo Wong: What was your first experience with ChatGPT?

Terence Tao: I played with it pretty much as soon as it came out. I posed some difficult math problems, and it gave pretty silly results. It was coherent English, it mentioned the right words, but there was very little depth. Anything really advanced, the early GPTs were not impressive at all. They were good for fun things—like if you wanted to explain some mathematical topic as a poem or as a story for kids. Those are quite impressive.

Wong: OpenAI says o1 can "reason," but you compared the model to "a mediocre, but not completely incompetent" graduate student.

Tao: That initial wording went viral, but it got misinterpreted. I wasn't saying that this tool is equivalent to a graduate student in every single aspect of graduate study. I was interested in using these tools as research assistants. A research project has a lot of tedious steps: You may have an idea and you want to flesh out computations, but you have to do it by hand and work it all out.

Wong: So it's a mediocre or incompetent research assistant.

Tao: Right, it's the equivalent, in terms of serving as that kind of an assistant. But I do envision a future where you do research through a conversation with a chatbot. Say you have an idea, and the chatbot went with it and filled out all the details.

It's already happening in some other areas. AI famously conquered chess years ago, but chess is still thriving today, because it's now possible for a reasonably good chess player to speculate what moves are good in what situations, and they can use the chess engines to check 20

moves ahead. I can see this sort of thing happening in mathematics eventually: You have a project and ask, "What if I try this approach?" And instead of spending hours and hours actually trying to make it work, you guide a GPT to do it for you.

With o1, you can kind of do this. I gave it a problem I knew how to solve, and I tried to guide the model. First I gave it a hint, and it ignored the hint and did something else, which didn't work. When I explained this, it apologized and said, "Okay, I'll do it your way." And then it carried out my instructions reasonably well, and then it got stuck again, and I had to correct it again. The model never figured out the most clever steps. It could do all the routine things, but it was very unimaginative.

One key difference between graduate students and AI is that graduate students learn. You tell an AI its approach doesn't work, it apologizes, it will maybe temporarily correct its course, but sometimes it just snaps back to the thing it tried before. And if you start a new session with AI, you go back to square one. I'm much more patient with graduate students because I know that even if a graduate student completely fails to solve a task, they have potential to learn and self-correct.

Wong: The way OpenAI describes it, o1 can recognize its mistakes, but you're saying that's not the same as sustained learning, which is what actually makes mistakes useful for humans.

Tao: Yes, humans have growth. These models are static—the feedback I give to GPT-4 might be used as 0.00001 percent of the training data for GPT-5. But that's not really the same as with a student.

AI and humans have such different models for how they learn and solve problems—I think it's better to think of AI as a complementary way to do tasks. For a lot of tasks, having both AIs and humans doing different things will be most promising.

Wong: You've also said previously that computer programs might transform mathematics and make it easier for humans to collaborate with one another. How so? And does generative AI have anything to contribute here?

Tao: Technically they aren't classified as AI, but proof assistants are useful computer tools that check whether a mathematical argument is correct or not. They enable large-scale collaboration in mathematics. That's a very recent advent.

Math can be very fragile: If one step in a proof is wrong, the whole argument can collapse. If you make a collaborative project with 100 people, you break your proof in 100 pieces and everybody contributes one. But if they don't coordinate with one another, the pieces might not fit properly. Because of this, it's very rare to see more than five people on a single project.

With proof assistants, you don't need to trust the people you're working with, because the program gives you this 100 percent guarantee. Then you can do factory production—type, industrial-scale mathematics, which doesn't really exist right now. One person focuses on just proving certain types of results, like a modern supply chain.

The problem is these programs are very fussy. You have to write your argument in a specialized language—you can't just write it in English. AI may be able to do some translation from human language to the programs. Translating one language to another is almost exactly what large language models are designed to do. The dream is that you just have a conversation with a chatbot explaining your proof, and the chatbot would convert it into a proof-system language as you go.

Wong: So the chatbot isn't a source of knowledge or ideas, but a way to interface.

Tao: Yes, it could be a really useful glue.

Wong: What are the sorts of problems that this might help solve?

Tao: The classic idea of math is that you pick some really hard problem, and then you have one or two people locked away in the attic for seven years just banging away at it. The types of problems you want to attack with AI are the opposite. The naive way you would use AI is to feed it the most difficult problem that we have in mathematics. I don't think that's going to be super successful, and also, we already have humans that are working on those problems.

The type of math that I'm most interested in is math that doesn't really exist. The project that I launched just a few days ago is about an area of math called universal algebra, which is about whether certain mathematical statements or equations imply that other statements are true. The way people have studied this in the past is that they pick one or two equations and they study them to death, like how a craftsman used to make one toy at a time, then work on the next one. Now we have factories; we can produce thousands of toys at a time. In my project, there's a collection of about 4,000 equations, and the task is to find connections between them. Each is relatively easy, but there's a million implications. There's like 10 points of light, 10 equations among these thousands that have been studied reasonably well, and then there's this whole terra incognita.

There are other fields where this transition has happened, like in genetics. It used to be that if you wanted to sequence a genome of an organism, this was an entire Ph.D. thesis. Now we have these gene-sequencing machines, and so geneticists are sequencing entire populations. You can do different types of genetics that way. Instead of narrow, deep mathematics, where an expert human works very hard on a narrow scope of problems, you could have broad, crowdsourced problems with lots of AI assistance that are maybe shallower, but at a much larger scale. And it could be a very complementary way of gaining mathematical insight.

Wong: It reminds me of how an AI program made by Google Deepmind, called AlphaFold, figured out how to predict the three-dimensional structure of proteins, which was for a long time something that had to be done one protein at a time.

Tao: Right, but that doesn't mean protein science is obsolete. You have to change the problems you study. A hundred and fifty years ago, mathematicians' primary usefulness was in solving partial differential equations. There are computer packages that do this automatically now. Six

hundred years ago, mathematicians were building tables of sines and cosines, which were needed for navigation, but these can now be generated by computers in seconds.

I'm not super interested in duplicating the things that humans are already good at. It seems inefficient. I think at the frontier, we will always need humans and AI. They have complementary strengths. AI is very good at converting billions of pieces of data into one good answer. Humans are good at taking 10 observations and making really inspired guesses.

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2024/10/terence-tao-ai-interview/680153/>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 6:00 AM No comments: 

Labels: UCLA

Two Months of Cash - Part 2

In a prior post, we noted that during the first two months of this fiscal year, state tax receipts were coming in faster than projected.* [CalMatters](#) suggests much of the overage came from a few tech companies in the midst of the AI boom:

No sooner had Gov. Gavin Newsom cut billions of dollars in spending to close a budget deficit in June than California received an unexpected tax windfall, one that has people in the Capitol speculating about where the avalanche of money came from. More corporate taxes than expected poured into state coffers this summer, with cash receipts exceeding forecasts by nearly \$2 billion since April. An especially big surge came in July, and state officials and accounting experts think the extra receipts came from a small number of companies — most likely one or more Silicon Valley tech firms, with artificial intelligence chipmaker Nvidia a leading candidate...




On a single day, July 16, the state received more than \$800 million than expected in corporate tax payments, "by far its single biggest day of collections" for a July going back at least four decades, state deputy legislative analyst Brian Uhler told [CalMatters](#). (He excluded 2020 because the pandemic delayed tax deadlines.) This July, the Finance Department said it collected about \$1.4 billion in corporate taxes, nearly three times the agency's forecast of \$500 million. In June, corporate taxes were \$263 million above forecast, and in May, \$752 million over. "The July overage was likely due to large payments by a small number of companies and may not necessarily be indicative of overall corporation tax revenue trends," the department said in its monthly bulletin...

Full story at <https://calmatters.org/economy/technology/2024/10/ca-corporate-tax-revenue-surge/>.

We noted, however, that the other major taxes also were coming in ahead of forecast levels. So, the total overage seems to be due to more than corporate prosperity.

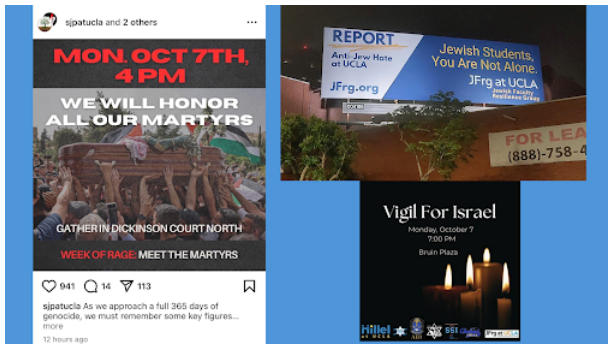
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*<https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2024/09/two-months-of-cash.html>.


Posted by California Policy Issues at 5:30 AM No comments: 

Labels: controller, State Budget

Monday, October 7, 2024

The Way We Live Now



Posted by California Policy Issues at 7:02 AM No comments: 

Labels: UCLA

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